

RAYS REPORT

Number of the day
29.26
 Average age of Rays' 25-man roster (including 39-year-old **Troy Percival** and 40-year-old **Brian Shouse**), tied for 14th youngest of 30 MLB teams.

The dish

Today: Rays at Red Sox
When/where: 4:05; Fenway Park, Boston
TV/radio: FSN; 620-AM, 680-AM (Spanish)
Probable pitchers



RAYS
 RHP James Shields (14-8, 3.56)

RED SOX
 RHP Josh Beckett (12-10, 4.03)

Rays info: 1-888-326-7297 (FAN-RAYS)

Watch for

Big-game James: Rays starter **James Shields**, who beat Baltimore in last year's opener, has never won in Boston, and it has been ugly, with an 0-3 record and 10.12 ERA. This is his first appearance at Fenway since the June 5 brawl he and **Coco Crisp** started.

No Joshin': Sox starter **Josh Beckett** is 5-3 with a 3.11 ERA in 10 starts against the Rays, with 75 strikeouts in 66 2/3 innings.

Pat's bat: New Rays DH **Pat Burrell** might have a tough time making a good first impression, not only does he have to get used to his new job, but he's only hit .171 against Beckett, with 10 strikeouts in 35 at-bats.

Motivational gimmick of the day

Coming soon are T-shirts with this year's slogan, '09 > '08, but with a twist. The "greater than" sign will have the team sunburst over it, thus becoming a Rays-ized "better than" sign that manager **Joe Maddon** preferred.

Roster by the numbers

- 11 Players not with the Rays last opening day
- 8 Players who were first-round picks
- 6 Players new to the organization in '09
- 5 Players having first opening day in big leagues

Did you know? Updated edition

April 7 is now the latest the Rays have ever opened a season; they opened on April 5 in 1999.

Changing places



Pat Burrell, above, will become the fifth player since 1970 to play against a team in the World Series then play for that team in its opener the following season. The list:

- Don Gullett:** '76 Reds, '77 Yanks
- Tommy John:** '78 Dodgers, '79 Yanks
- Gary Thomasson:** '78 Dodgers, '79 Yanks
- Edgar Renteria:** '04 Cards, '05 Red Sox
- Burrell: '08 Phillies, '09 Rays

On deck

Wednesday: at Red Sox, 7:10, Sun. Rays — Scott Kazmir (12-8, 3.49); Red Sox — Jon Lester (16-6, 3.21)

Thursday: at Red Sox, 1:35, FSN. Rays — Matt Garza (11-9, 3.79); Red Sox — Daisuke Matsuzaka (18-3, 2.90)

Friday: at Orioles, 7:05, Sun. Rays — Andy Sonnanstine (13-9, 4.38); Orioles — LH Mark Hendrickson (7-8, 5.45)

Saturday: at Orioles, 7:05 Sun. Rays — Jeff Niemann (2-2, 5.06); Orioles — Jeremy Guthrie (10-12, 3.63)

Sunday: at Orioles, 1:35 FSN. Rays — James Shields (14-8, 3.56); Orioles — Adam Eaton (4-8, 5.80)

Quote of the day

"I don't think we've ever been at home opening day. So it's not really a surprise to me, no. We've got to win more to get that honor."

Rays starter **James Shields**, on opening on the road despite being AL champs.

For starters

Expected lineups for today's game:

RAYS	Iwamura, 2b	Joyce, cf	RED SOX	Ellsbury, cf	Bay, lf
	Crawford, lf	Navarro, c		Pedroia, 2b	Lowell, 3b
	Longoria, 3b	Gross, rf		Ortiz, dh	Lowrie, ss
	Pena, 1b	Bartlett, ss		Youkilis, 1b	Varitek, c
	Burrell, dh	Shields, p		Drew, rf	Beckett, p

Notebook

One-day delay no big deal to Shields

BY MARC TOPKIN
 Times Staff Writer

BOSTON — RHP **James Shields** was headed for the Starbucks in the lobby of the team hotel around 9:30 Monday morning when manager **Joe Maddon**, cautiously, approached his extremely focused starter with the news that the season opener had been postponed.

"I just told him to turn it off, because you know how he is," Maddon said. "We wanted to give him the word far enough in advance, and we did. He'll be fine. There's no concern with him."

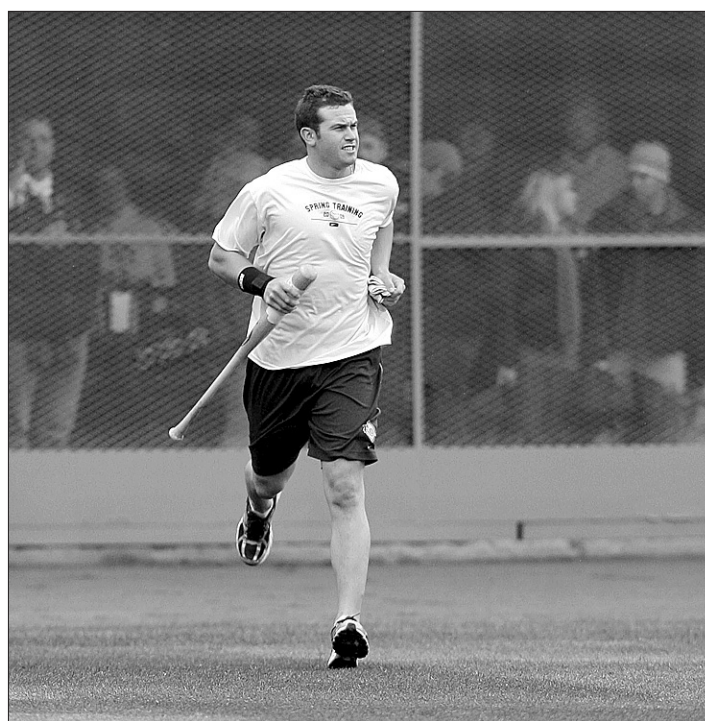
As much as Shields was geared for Monday, he said the extra day's rest won't affect his preparation or his performance. He'll go have another nice dinner (it was kobe steak on Sunday) and get another good night's rest.

"Just the anxiousness, just being anxious to start the season off," he said. "We're going to watch all the other teams play tonight, and we're going to be sitting in the hotel. There's no real disadvantage or anything."

"I prepare when I wake up in the morning anyway, so I'm as ready as I can be. Hopefully we'll get it in (today) and start the season off right."

MATT'S MOMENT: OF **Matt Joyce** is one of five Rays on an opening-day roster for the first time, joining **Grant Balfour**, **Evan Longoria**, **Joe Nelson** and **Jeff Niemann**.

And getting to do so with his



JAMES BORCHUCK | Times

Rays third baseman Evan Longoria runs from the visitors' indoor batting cage to the clubhouse after the rain started.

new, and hometown, team as a starter, and on his first-ever trip to Fenway Park, makes it even more thrilling. "That's special," Joyce said. "It's the opportunity of a lifetime. It's what every kid dreams of, starting opening day in centerfield, playing on an American League champion team, and especially opening at Fenway, as much history as there is here."

RED SOX MYSTIQUE: The Rays were told they could have the

field for batting practice after the Red Sox worked out Monday morning.

And it just so happened that by the time the Sox got done and the Rays got all their equipment and players on the field, the rain started to fall, forcing the Rays to cut it short after only two hitters, scramble off the field and relocate to the indoor cages.

"I had a feeling that was going to happen," hitting coach **Steve Henderson** said. "They always

do stuff like that here. ... It's always something when you come here. It's different, let's put it like that. They got their hitting in, and we didn't get ours."

ROCCO REUNION: Having faced his ex-mates in spring training, ex-Ray/new-Red Sox **Rocco Baldelli** said it will be "definitely different" but not too odd playing against them this week, with a likely start in rightfield on Wednesday.

But the April 30-May 3 series in St. Pete might be a bigger deal. "I think going down to the Trop will be definitely different for me the first time we head down there," he said.

HOME BOY: The rainout cost RHP **Dan Wheeler** his mom's special grilled chicken dinner. Wheeler planned to go home to Warwick, R.I., after Monday's game and spend today's scheduled off day with his parents and his sister's new baby, **Brady**. "It would have been nice to spend a day-and-a-half there," he said.

MISCELLANY: FSN will show today's game, with a pregame show at 3:30. ... There will be a WDAE Watch Party at Lee Roy Selmon's across from International Plaza in Tampa. ... Nos. 4-5 starters RHPs **Andy Sonnanstine** and **Jeff Niemann** rejoined the team after working out in Port Charlotte on Sunday. ... OF **Carl Crawford** is the only remaining player from the 2003 opening-day roster, when the Rays last opened against Boston.

» RAYS continued from 1C

Scheduling logic cold comfort for Rays

"I know the weather's really good at Tropicana Field today," manager **Joe Maddon** said. "It's kind of difficult to understand whereas we have a building with a roof on it and we're like a couple hours from where we just completed spring training and so are they, and we have to come up here to do this. That's the part that's a little bit confusing."

"There's absolutely no logic to it," veteran reliever **Troy Percival** said. "That's all I can go with. I don't know that they have a reason for anything. I think they throw it into a computer and you get spit out."

Basically, the Rays and Red Sox were playing in Boston because that's how Major League Baseball scheduled it, a complicated and, yes, computerized process that even the executive in charge of it, senior vice president **Katy Feene**, admits is "an imperfect system to say the least."

"I know it doesn't make logical sense to have a domed stadium and you don't open there," she said.

Several factors are involved. And none have to do with any privilege, or lack thereof, from being the American League champs, since the schedule is first drafted in June and July, refined and released in September. "Well before we knew who was going to go where in the postseason," Feene said.

The Rays requested to open at home, a product of the spring



JAMES BORCHUCK | Times

The tarp gets pulled over the field at Fenway Park. Conditions are expected to be better for today's rescheduled game.

training move to Port Charlotte. In prior years they wanted to open on the road after spending all spring in St. Petersburg.

But other teams also want to open at home, and only seven AL teams can. "Not every club can get what they request, and sometimes clubs' requests conflict with each other," Feene said. "It's a schedule for 30 teams, not one or two. And it's a balancing act to fill it out."

Also, MLB officials expected the weather in the Northeast and Midwest to be better with the season starting a week later than usual (because of the World Baseball Classic). There is a rotation of opponents, and sites, to be factored in. The requests of other teams at other times of the

season impact matchups.

The process is not totally random, Feene said, and after the computer generates a schedule, there can be some "human manipulation."

But what can look like simple solutions, such as swapping the opening series in Boston with the April 30-May 3 series at the Trop, are also complicated.

Doing that, for example, would further extend a rigorous April 21-29 road trip to Seattle, Oakland and Minnesota; give the Rays two days at home in a 24-day period; cost them one of their few marquee weekend series; and require further adjustment because it's trading a three-game series for a four — and because the Rays are scheduled to be back

in Boston May 8-10.

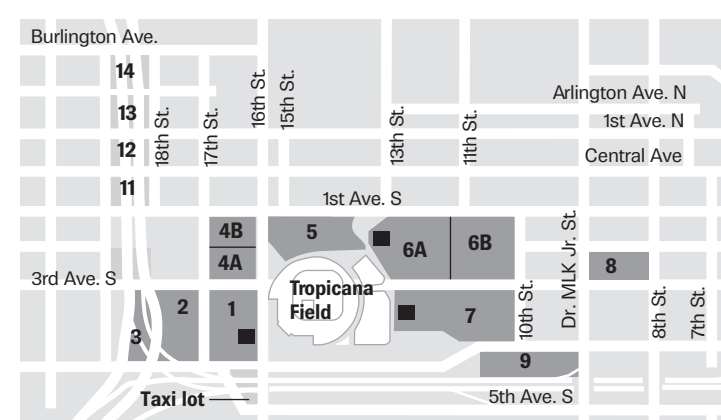
"If it was 50 and sunny there today, nobody would be saying anything," Feene said.

The good news Monday was that the decision came early, around 10 a.m., even if Red Sox president **Larry Lucchino** did ramble on in a statement about their fans getting the "full experience" of "this unofficial Red Sox Nation holiday."

Maddon said they figured the game wouldn't be played, and "I'd much prefer that we wait given the circumstances. ... As opposed to battling through inclement weather, I'd rather do it this way."

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Parking day of game



General Parking
 Day of game parking is not available for purchase in advance

Lot 1*	\$30*
Lot 2, 3, 6B, 7, 8, 9	\$15
Lot 11, 12, 13, 14	\$10

(*Subject to availability)

Free Parking
 Vehicles with 4 or more people can park
 Lots 2, 3, 6B, 7, 8, 9, 11, 12, 13, 14
 (Not applicable for Lot 1)

Permits/Reserved Parking
 Lot 1, 2, 6A

Valet Parking
 Lot 4A
 (Valet service dropoff and pickup on Tropicana Drive)

Disabled Parking
 Lot 1, 6A, 7, 11

Staff Parking
 Lot 4B, 5

RV Parking
 Lot 8

Source: City of St. Petersburg, Tampa Bay Rays

Times

Baseball

Notebook

Baseball gets Bush back into spotlight

Associated Press

ARLINGTON, Texas — Former President **George W. Bush** wound up his right arm with two windmill whirls, then fired a high strike to help the Rangers start the season Monday.

In his first big appearance locally since moving to Dallas from the White House, Bush received a standing ovation and overwhelming cheers from a crowd of about 40,000 after the public address announcer said, "We welcome home the 43rd president."

Bush, the team's managing general partner from 1989 until being elected governor of Texas in 1994, acknowledged the cheers as he made his way to the base of the mound.

Hall of Famer **Nolan Ryan**, now the team's president, was a few steps behind to deliver the ball. Bush's throw easily made it over the plate and into the mitt of star OF **Josh Hamilton**. Afterward, the two shook hands and Hamilton pulled out a pen and the president signed the ball.

"I told him, 'You didn't need to bring a glove. It's so slow, you could catch it barehanded,'" Bush said while spending part of the second inning with the team's radio crew.

Bush briefly visited the press box ("Anybody working in here?" he hollered), then spent the bottom of the second with the radio announcers and the entire third with the TV crew.

In Baltimore, Vice President **Joe Biden** got the honors before the opener against the Yankees. The team said Biden was the first sitting vice president to throw out a ceremonial first pitch at the stadium.

DL STINTS DROP: There were 69 players on disabled lists at the start of the season, down from 106 last year and 97 in 2007. The only lower total since the major leagues expanded to 30 teams in 1998 was 66 in 2006, the commissioner's office said.

Rob Manfred, MLB's executive vice president of labor relations, said the figure counters those who say the World Baseball Classic causes more players to get hurt.

"It certainly does not support the theory that the WBC causes more injuries," Manfred said. "More important, the WBC injuries were, almost exclusively, the type of small injuries (oblique strains) that are common in spring training, with or without the WBC."

FOREIGN PRESENCE: The percentage of major-leaguers born outside the 50 states remained the same this year. Of the 818 players on rosters at the start of the season, 229 were born outside the 50 states, the commissioner's office said. That matched the 28 percent last year, down from 29 percent in 2007 and the record 29.2 percent set in 2005.

UMPS UNION: **Joe West**, who worked his first major-league game in 1976 and later lost his job in a contract dispute with baseball, is the new president of the World Umpires Association. West beat out longtime head **John Hirschbeck** in the February election. They were the only candidates and the union did not publicly announce the results.

D'BACKS: **Felipe Lopez** and **Tony Clark** became the first switch-hitting teammates to homer from both sides of the plate in a game since **Jorge Posada** and **Bernie Williams** did it for the Yankees on April 23, 2000. It had never been done on opening day.

INDIANS: Utilityman **Jamey Carroll** went on the 15-day disabled list with a broken left hand and will be out up to six weeks. Carroll was hit by a pitch in Saturday's exhibition game against Houston.

PADRES: Former Rays DH **Cliff Floyd** went on the 15-day disabled list with a strained right shoulder retroactive to Sunday.

REDS: RHP **Bronson Arroyo**, who had a flareup of carpal tunnel syndrome during spring training, threw before the game and felt good. The team decided to let the former **Hernando High** standout make his scheduled start Thursday against the Mets instead of resting for the week.